

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03

SS-20 USIA-15 ACDA-19 IO-14 OMB-01 AID-20 NIC-01 EB-11

CU-04 SAJ-01 DRC-01 COME-00 /189 W

----- 099565

R 280825Z NOV 73

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8560

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

INFO AMCONSUL HONG KONG

CINCPAC

S E C R E T BANGKOK 18492

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, TH, UR

SUBJECT: SOVIET ACTIVITIES IN THAILAND

REF: BANGKOK A-288 (NOTAL)

1. BACKGROUND: SOVIET-THAI RELATIONS HAVE NEVER BEEN PARTICULARLY CLOSE AND, AS A LOCAL MANIFESTATION THE SOVIETS HAVE BEEN SUBJECTED TO FREQUENT PRESS PLAY CRITICIZING THEIR COUNTRY AND ITS POLICIES AND TO FREQUENT ANTI-COMMUNIST PRONOUNCEMENTS BY THE ROYAL THAI GOVERNMENT. IN VIEW OF THE SOMEWHAT HOSTILE ENVIRONMENT, SOVIET POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, AND CULTURAL EFFORTS IN THAILAND HAVE PREDICTABLY BEEN LIMITED IN BOTH DIMENSION AND IMPACT. IN SPITE OF THE DIFFICULTIES FACING THEM AND AS AN INDICATION OF THE IMPORTANCE THE SOVIETS ATTACH TO THAILAND, THE SOVIET UNION IS REPRESENTED IN BANGKOK BY A SIZEABLE MISSION OF APPROXIMATELY 60 OFFICIALS; IN 1973 THERE ARE 25 OFFICERS WITH DIPLOMATIC STATUS, 12 TRADE REPRESENTATIVES, 21 ADMINISTRATIVE/SUPPORT OFFICERS, AND ONE TASS CORRESPONDENT, IN ADDITION TO THREE SOVIET NATIONALS EMPLOYED

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PONDENT, IN ADDITION TO THREE SOVIET NATIONALS EMPLOYED

AT ECAFE. AN IMPORTANT REASON FOR THE LARGE SIZE OF THE SOVIET MISSION IN BANGKOK IS THE COLLECTION OF INTELLIGENCE INFORMATION ON THE PLANS AND ACTIVITIES OF THE UNITED STATES AND THE PRC. MANY OF THE STAFF LISTED ABOVE ARE KGB/GRU EMPLOYEES.

2. OBJECTIVES: POLITICALLY, THE SOVIET UNION'S PRIMARY OBJECTIVE IN THAILAND HAS BEEN TO SHOW THE FLAG WHILE BUILDING AND MAINTAINING THE IMAGE OF THE USSR AS A MAJOR POWER WITH POLITICAL, MILITARY, ECONOMIC, AND CULTURAL INTERESTS IN ASIA AND PARTICULARLY IN THAILAND. IN COMPARISON WITH THE PARLIAMENTARY YEARS 1969-71, RECENT SOVIET POLITICAL INITIATIVES IN THAILAND HAVE BEEN LIMITED. WITH THE OUSTER OF THE THANOM GOVERNMENT AND THE ANTICIPATED RETURN TO PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY, THE SOVIETS WILL PROBABLY RESUME THEIR EXTENSIVE CULTIVATION OF POLITICIANS, ESPECIALLY THOSE WITH LEFTIST POLITICAL ATTITUDES OR THOSE WILLING TO ACCEPT OR WORK FOR CLOSER COOPERATION BETWEEN THE THAI AND SOVIET GOVERNMENTS.

3. CULTURAL EXCHANGE: BECAUSE OF THAI UNWILLINGNESS AND INABILITY TO RECIPROCATATE, THAI-SOVIET CULTURAL EXCHANGES HAVE BEEN MINIMAL. IN DECEMBER 1972 A SOCCER TEAM AND A CIRCUS TROUPE MADE BRIEF APPEARANCES IN BANGKOK. SINCE THEN, THE ONLY OTHER CULTURAL INTERACTION BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES WAS THE SEPTEMBER 1973 VISIT OF THE KIROV BALLET BASED IN LENINGRAD (BANGKOK A-329). IN ALL THREE CASES, THE SOVIET VISITS HAVE MET WITH BICKERING AND RED TAPE FROM THE RESPONSIBLE THAI OFFICIALS. THE RTG HAS BEEN RELUCTANT TO PERMIT ANY EDUCATIONAL EXCHANGES BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES.

4. INFORMATIONAL ACTIVITIES: THE USSR CURRENTLY HOLDS PUBLIC SHOWINGS OF SOVIET FILMS ON AN APPROXIMATE MONTHLY BASIS, AND SPONSORS RUSSIAN LANGUAGE CLASSES, PRIMARILY FOR UNIVERSITY-LEVEL STUDENTS. THE LOCAL SOVIET INFORMATION SERVICE PREPARES AND ARRANGES THE REGULAR PUBLICATION AND DISTRIBUTION OF A THRICE-WEEKLY BULLETIN OF NEWS AND EDITORIALS, A MONTHLY MAGA-
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ZINE OF FEATURES AND COMMENTARY, AND AN IRREGULARLY PUBLISHED SPECIAL NEWS BULLETIN ON THE SINO-SOVIET DISPUTE AND DEVELOPMENTS IN THE PRC.

5. TRADE: THAI-SOVIET TRADE HAS NEVER BEEN EXTENSIVE, AND THE KIND AND QUANTITY OF COMMODITIES TRADED HAVE VARIED CONSIDERABLY FROM YEAR TO YEAR. WITH THE POSSIBLE EXCEPTION OF SEEKING TO ACQUIRE ONE

OR TWO ECONOMICALLY USEFUL ITEMS, SOVIET TRADE POLICY
HAS BEEN BASED UPON POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS.

6. RECENT COMARADERIE WITH OFFICIAL AMERICANS: THE
SOVIET AND AMERICAN EMBASSIES HAVE INDULGED IN A NUMBER
OF SOCIAL EXCHANGES BEGINNING DURING THE SUMMER OF 1973.
THEY HAVE RESULTED IN GREATER PERSONAL FAMILIARITY,
BUT LITTLE SUBSTANTIVE ACCOMPLISHMENT.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: FOREIGN RELATIONS, ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE, POLITICAL STABILITY, PRESS COMMENTS, FOREIGN POLICY POSITION, CULTURAL EXCHANGES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 28 NOV 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: garlanwa
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973BANGKO18492
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: n/a
From: BANGKOK
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t1973119/aaaaaggw.tel
Line Count: 124
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: BANGKOK A-288 (NOTAL)
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: garlanwa
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 30 JUL 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <30-Jul-2001 by kelleyw0>; APPROVED <05-Dec-2001 by garlanwa>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SOVIET ACTIVITIES IN THAILAND
TAGS: PFOR, TH, UR
To: STATE MOSCOW
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005